

Minutes
ANC 6A Community Outreach Committee (COC) of
Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6A
Regular Meeting - June 15, 2015
Maury Elementary School
1250 Constitution Avenue NE, Washington, DC

Meeting called to order at 7:07 pm.

COC members present: Roni Hollmon, Gladys Mack, Dana Wyckoff (Co-Chair)

COC members absent: Jean Kohanek, Raphael Marshall (Co-Chair), Joyce West, Shirley Worthy

ANC Commissioners present: Sondra Phillips-Gilbert, Stephanie Zimny

Community members present: Gimbiya Kettering-Lim, Holly Harper, Nicole Coomber, Mulikat Sarumi, Frannie Wooten, Hannah Lewis, Edward Minor, Ed Gilbert, Mary Chang and Leif Findberg.

I. Community Presentation

Dual Language (Mandarin) Proposal for Miner Elementary School (ES) - presented by Gimbiya Kettering-Lim. (Handouts attached).

Ms. Kettering-Lim and other **community members** are interested in bringing a second dual-language immersion program to Ward 6 Elementary Schools. **Currently there is a Spanish-language program at Tyler Elementary School (ES). The proposal presented by Ms. Kettering-Lim is for a Mandarin Chinese program at Miner ES. The group has spoken with District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) officials and are seeking input and support from the community, the Miner Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)/parents, the Miner principal, the ANCs, and the Ward 6 Education Committee.**

Dual-language immersion programs aim to bring the student to a level-4 (of 5) proficiency in the language. At least half of the instruction time would be in the **“partner language,”** Mandarin. Math and science would be taught in Mandarin, while language arts would be taught in Mandarin and English.

Ms. Kettering-Lim noted that studies over more than thirty (30) years show that immersion language programs yield improvement in academics and test scores, and that participants test a half-grade ahead in English. **There are benefits to the schools that have such programs, including increased enrollment, higher test/academic scores, and more parental involvement in the school. There are also community benefits, such as less disruptive behavior inside and outside the school, more involvement between the school and the surrounding neighborhood, and retention of families seeking good schools.**

Currently, DCPS offers only Spanish as a language option. Ms. Kettering-Lim said (and others in the audience agreed) that DCPS does not have a long-term plan for education and programs. Mandarin Chinese is considered a ‘critical needs language’ for business and international affairs and more schools nationwide are teaching or starting Mandarin language programs. A local example is the Yu Ying charter school in Brookland, which had nineteen (19) open slots for its Chinese immersion program and had 11,000 applications.

Ms. Kettering-Lim noted that Miner is a “Title 1” school (the federal government program to close the achievement gap between low-income and other students through remedial education, instruction, counseling, parental involvement and program improvement). She said that in the past school year, there were ninety-two (92) homeless children at the school, the highest percentage in the city. Ms. Kettering-Lim said there is a ‘downward trend’ in test scores and enrollment; and provided graphs (attached) that showed falling reading scores from 2010-2014, and declining math scores from 2010-2013, with a slight rise in 2013-14.

Ms. Kettering-Lim said that the Pre-K3 and 4 classes are highly sought-after by parents but that many chose to leave for other in-bounds or charter schools after kindergarten, because of poor performance and inadequate resources in higher grades. Miner has recently lost one of the science teachers due to decreasing enrollment. Many audience members (at least one on the Miner PTO) echoed these concerns about school performance in grades 1 through 5. One man said that all three of his closest neighbors plan to move their children to other schools once they finish Pre-K3/4. Nicole Coomber, who lives in 7D (Kingman Park), said she is putting her older son into first grade at another school because of concerns about Miner’s lack of resources.

There was general and prolonged discussion about the quality and consistency of the academic standards and programs at Miner; Committee Member Roni Hollmon stressed that consistent and long-term participation in the school’s PTO was vital to ensure a voice at DCPS, the Education Committee, etc., and within the school. She offered to communicate with and provide guidance to audience members and the Miner PTO representative (this has been done).

Committee Member Hollmon noted that since DCPS currently does not offer Chinese in middle or high schools, the language skills would not continue past the elementary school level. She also said that Eliot-Hine Middle School (MS) is awaiting International Baccalaureate (IB) accreditation, and asked if there would be support extended to the middle schools and high schools. Ms. Kettering-Lim said that IB and immersion fit together well and that the process should include advocating for specialized teacher patterns for remedial language education for those who did not study the language during elementary school. She added that a dual language program in elementary school would have a cascading effect on students as they move to middle and high schools, with better test scores and learning skills. The group plans to meet with officials at Eastern High School, Eliot-Hine MS and other schools.

Committee Member Hollmon also asked how a parent would help a child with Mandarin homework. Ms. Kettering-Lim said that there would be homework support for both the children and parents, as well as online ‘portals’ and printouts for parents. Increased parent-teacher meetings are also part of the program.

Committee Member Gladys Mack asked why Mandarin Chinese is being suggested as a ‘partner’ language, why at Miner ES, and does DCPS have adequate materials and teachers for such a program. Ms. Kettering-Lim said that Mandarin is a global/business language now and for the future and that Miner has adequate space for a program. To attract and keep students, and really, their parents, the school has to perform better beyond Pre-K3 and K4. If the program is approved, a teacher and materials would be provided by DCPS.

Commissioner Stephanie Zimny asked what the next steps are for the group. Ms. Kettering-Lim said they will hold additional community meetings over the next few months to build interest and support. DCPS requires that the school principal formally request a program, so outreach will center on getting the principal to agree and on identifying interested pupils (40 to 60 the first year). They will also request a letter of support from ANC 6A and other pertinent ANCs (i.e., 7D), and from the Council Member, the PTO, the Ward 6 Education Committee and the ANC 6A community. They are also seeking representation on the Local School Advisory Committee (LSAT).

Co-Chair Dana Wyckoff thanked Ms. Kettering-Lim for her presentation, and offered a forum for the group at future COC meetings and noted that the ANC would discuss education issues at a future meeting.

Community discussion then switched to public safety issues, specifically around Fifteenth (15th) and C Streets NE. Co-Chair Wyckoff offered to send safety tips and Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) contact information to the audience member (done).

II. Committee Business

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee will be August 17, 2015.

III. Old Business

Due to time limitations, this was not discussed.

IV. New Business

Due to time limitations, this was not discussed.

V. Meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

**The next regular meeting of the ANC 6A COC
Monday, August 17, 2015 at 7:00 pm
Maury Elementary School, 1250 Constitution Ave NE
(enter from 200 block of Thirteenth (13th) Street)**